
Let's Replace Battle Drill 6

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Many of the techniques Infantrymen use are based on doctrine, but basic infantry tactics boil down to one thing—battle drills. Unfortunately, doctrine has evolved over time while

our battle drills have not—Battle Drill 6, *Enter a Building and Clear a Room*, in particular. On the basis of my experience as a rifle company commander in Somalia, I believe that Battle

Drill 6 in ARTEP 7-8 DRILL, *Battle Drills for the Infantry Platoon and Squad*, is an outdated method of clearing a room for any type of military operation.

The drill manual describes the basic room clearing technique by first positioning a clearing team on either side of the room entrance. Once the team is in position, the lead man "cooks-off" a hand grenade and throws it into the room. Following the explosion, the lead man enters the room by engaging all "identified or likely enemy positions with rapid, short bursts of automatic fire and scans the room. The rest of the team provides immediate security outside the room." Following the initial entry, the lead man is responsible for positioning the other members of the team as he calls them into the room with the command, "Next man in, left (right)." Depending on the enemy situation, this battle drill can be done with two men entering the room at the same time from opposite sides of the entrance with one high and one low to prevent fratricide.

As commander of a company, I had concerns about Battle Drill 6 before leaving for Somalia for Operation *Continue Hope*. The unit leaders and soldiers were ready, but hostile activity had escalated since my first tour in Somalia during *Restore Hope*. This escalation led to many conversations within my company and in the battalion about small-unit tactics in urban terrain. Because of the rules of engagement, we knew we couldn't just enter a room and spray it with automatic weapon fire.

Even if we could, the tile floors and substandard building construction typical in Mogadishu might cause ricochets and fratricide.

These initial concerns became reality when my company conducted a raid in Mogadishu to capture an enemy mortar tube. We entered the building by first clearing a hallway with a fragmentation grenade. The resulting explosion made the building almost impossible to clear because of poor visibility and obstructions from the collapsed roof. The mortar cache was never found in the rubble, and because of the extra time needed to clear the building, we received RPG and small arms fire from enemy reinforcements. Following this raid, our internal after-action review concluded that we needed to modify Battle Drill 6 or risk the mission and, more seriously, the lives of our soldiers.

Fortunately, a truly professional squad leader from the 3d Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, part of Task Force Ranger, brought his squad members to my company area in Mogadishu and taught us the room clearing method they called "The Stack." My First Sergeant and I then took their technique a step further and developed a room clearing drill with a three-day training plan to teach it to every man in the company. This drill applies not only to the limited operations typical in peacekeeping, but also to operations as intense and hostile

as those my unit would soon face.

Understanding the basic layout of a room is critical to understanding this drill. In Somalia, more than 95 percent of all engagements inside a building were within 25 feet. Additionally, the entrance to a room was the most vulnerable and critical point (decisive point), because that was where the enemy expected us to enter. Figure 1 shows a basic room with this decisive point or "Fatal Funnel." We also identified four "Points of Domination" (PODs) and a direction of fire ("No Man's Land") using the four corners of the room. The side of the room entrance from which the clearing team enters determines the location of No Man's Land. The key to this battle drill is to mass the maximum amount of firepower possible at the fatal funnel and quickly move through it to the assigned PODs, orienting all weapons toward No Man's Land. Each man has one mission: *Secure your POD*. A soldier engages any perceived threat along the route to his POD. Fragmentation grenades should be used only upon encountering heavy resistance, and stun grenades are preferred because they offer less obscuration and less potential for fratricide. Both types of grenades should be used sparingly to avoid establishing a pattern that tells the enemy when a room will be entered.

The stack of personnel outside the room is vital in getting firepower

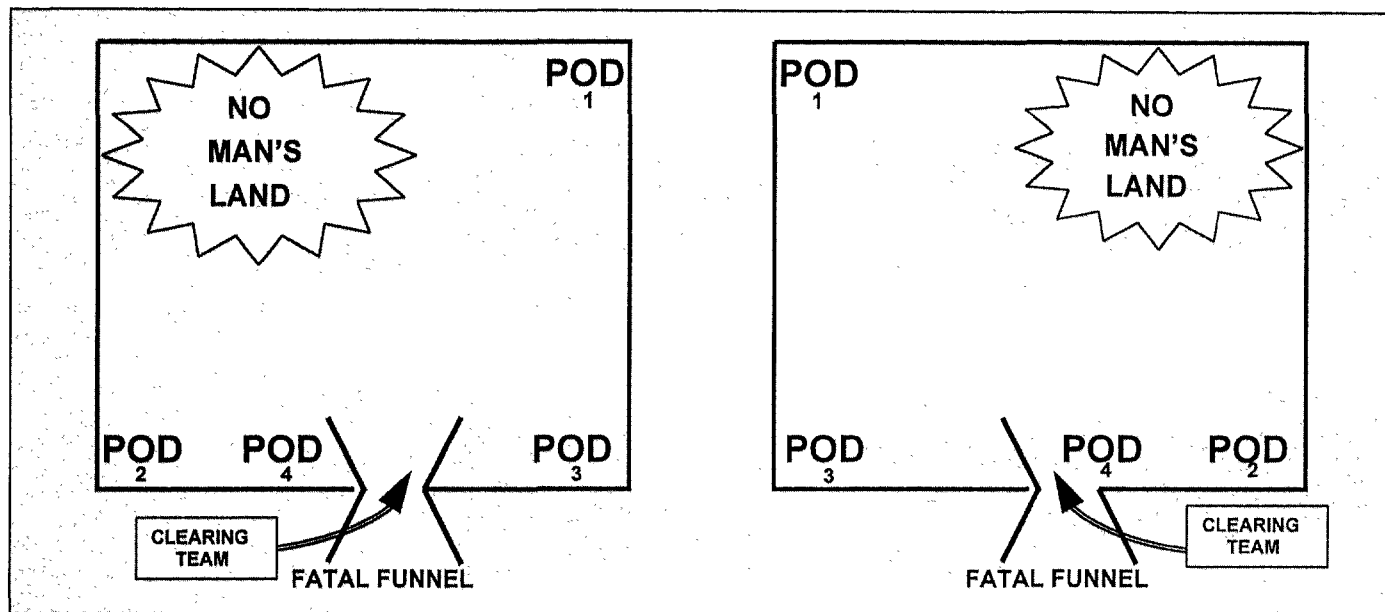


Figure 1

quickly through the fatal funnel. Each soldier is responsible for a POD determined by his position in the stack. Unlike the current Battle Drill 6, this drill does not try to synchronize and push two men with equipment through a doorway at once or send one man in to fight a room alone. The physical contact of the men as they flow into the room provides the synchronization and confidence they need.

Knowing the responsibilities of each position in the stack is essential in actual combat situations. The casualties, fatigue, dangers, and confusion associated with actual combat makes it difficult to maintain even *platoon* integrity. It was not uncommon in Somalia for soldiers from different platoons to be tasked to clear a room or series of rooms, and it was knowing all the positions of the stack that made this possible.

Figure 2 describes the responsibilities for each man in the stack. Regardless of which side of the entrance the stack goes through, the duty of each man remains the same. The two primary positions, the #1 Man and the #2 Man, are responsible for the left and right limit PODs. Depending on which way the door opens, one of these men must ride the door all the way to the wall to make sure no enemy are behind it. The #1 Man always moves across the doorway and goes to the deep corner of the room (straight and long). The #2 Man always buttonhooks the doorway and moves to the near corner (buttonhook and short). The #3 and #4 Men follow #1 and #2,

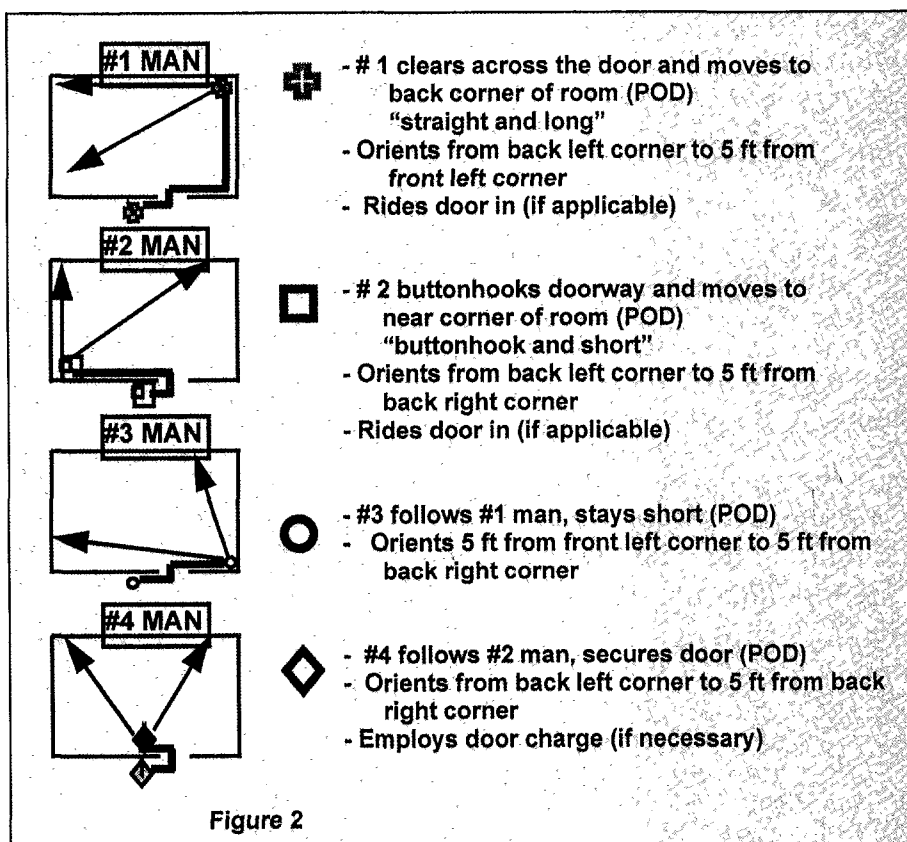


Figure 2

Figure 2

respectively, and establish their PODs. Additionally, each man must complete his lead man's mission in the event he is wounded or a weapon malfunctions (signaled by dropping to one knee). The #4 man has the additional duty of placing the door charge in the event the door is blocked.

While it is possible to conduct this battle drill with only three men, using four is preferred. Four men clearing a room gives a team the flexibility re-

quired in the event there are additional, unknown rooms or casualties. In Somalia, rooms were typically cluttered and extremely difficult to move around in, and the fourth man was a big help in clearing each room. In actual combat, the probability of success decreases greatly with less than three men. Two men should attempt to clear a room only under the most extreme circumstance, and one man should never attempt the task alone. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate

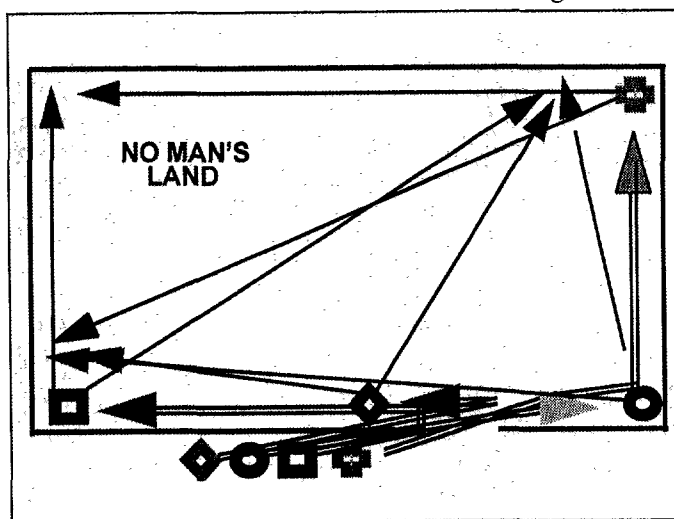


Figure 3. Four-man technique.

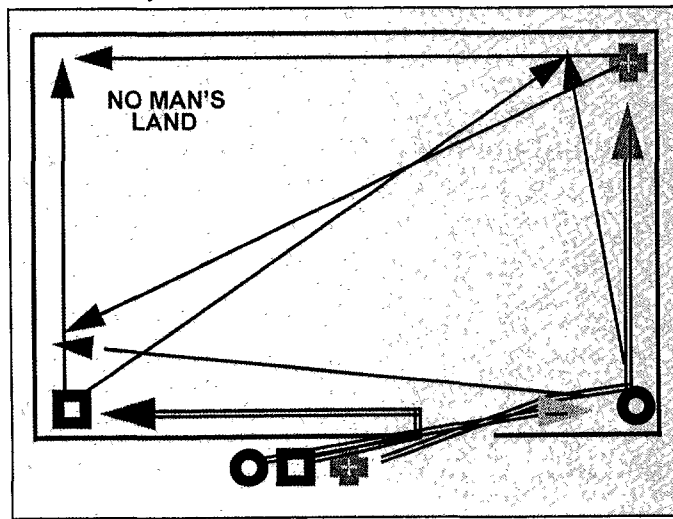


Figure 4. Three-man technique.

this battle drill using four or three men.

All soldiers in the stack must understand several key points when executing this battle drill. Massing combat power at and through the fatal funnel does not mean running through the doorway. Movements by the members of the team must be deliberate and synchronized. This is why physical contact between members of the team is critical. Each man stacks up outside the entrance as tight as he can with the man to his front. Weapons are pointed downward, with the exception of the #1 Man, who provides front security. Once the #4 Man is ready to move into the room, he pushes his knee into the #3 Man to signal he is ready. The #3 Man does the same to the #2 Man and the #2 the same to the #1 Man. Once the #1 Man feels the tap of the #2 Man, he moves into the room and quickly focuses on the route to his POD. Any threat he sees that prevents him from getting to his POD is engaged with two rounds using the basic quick-fire technique from FM 23-9, *M16A1 and M16A2 Rifle Marksmanship*. Developing this tunnel vision—as well as trusting himself, his buddy, and his equipment—is essential for success in this battle drill.

Understanding the concept of this battle drill, and given the constraints placed on us in Somalia, my First Sergeant and I began to develop a plan to train the company. Since we operated on a three-day rotation between training, main supply route security, and the quick reaction company (QRC), we had to either train the entire company in three days with pre-range instruction during the QRF cycle or train over several three-day training cycles. While tasked as the QRC, the unit could conduct some training similar to that normally conducted in garrison. The result of our planning was five phases of training over a four-day period.

Before the three days of range training, we conducted Phase I training. This training can be conducted anywhere with nothing more than engineer tape to outline different room layouts. Soldiers performed the battle drill in these rooms while leaders evaluated to make sure they understood it. Stressing the importance of box training is critical

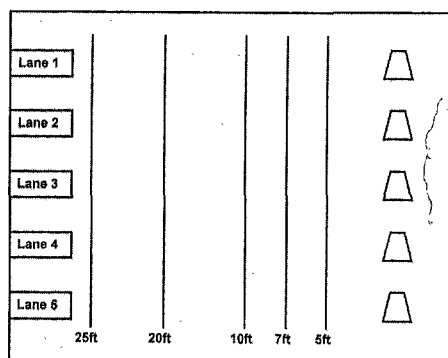


Figure 5. Quick-Fire Range

to this plan because it allows soldiers to see what is being done inside the room without actually being in it. This allows the leader to show his soldiers different situations with everyone viewing the battle drill from outside the room. By using different types of room layouts, leaders ensure complete understanding of the battle drill before getting on the range. During my company's three days of QRF, we continually conducted this training, and junior leaders went a step farther by rearranging our barracks to further help men understand the technique.

The three days of range training gave the company more than enough time to become proficient in this battle drill. The buildings that made up the range layout were outside the city of Mogadishu and allowed for 360-degree fields of fire. They were constructed of cement and consisted of a series of rooms with tile floors. Additionally, they had no roofs that might have caused falling debris. The area used for the quick-fire range was an open field, approximately 200 square meters in size, across from the buildings. With minimal resources and effort, the training area was cleared

by battalion assets in less than one day and ready for training.

Phase II or quick-fire training is based on the individual technique discussed in FM 23-9. Every soldier fired an M16 for live fire training. Soldiers first practiced the technique using the dry fire method. Leaders ensured that each man correctly identified the target from the low ready position, simultaneously lifted the weapon and used his thumb to move his M-16 selector switch to semiautomatic, engaged the target from above his sights, and switched his weapon back to safe. Only after correctly executing this sequence was the soldier allowed to move to the live-fire area (Figure 5). Once on the live-fire range, soldiers executed the quick-fire drill from the stationary position and while moving forward, left, right, and backward. Soldiers had to hit all of the E-type targets at the 5-foot, 7-foot, and 10-foot lines before advancing to the next line. Eighty percent target hits were required at the 20-foot and 25-foot lines. The squad leader's assessment of the soldiers' confidence in the drill was also required for advancement to Phase III.

We conducted Phases III-V all in the same buildings. Each building was set up in the same manner, with half of it designated a dry-fire area and half a live-fire area (Figure 6). Targets were set up using sand bags as a backdrop and also to frame windows. A wooden pallet was placed against the backdrops with E-type silhouettes stapled to them. Although there was a concern about safety due to the tile floors in the buildings, the leaders maintained strict quick-fire performance standards, and

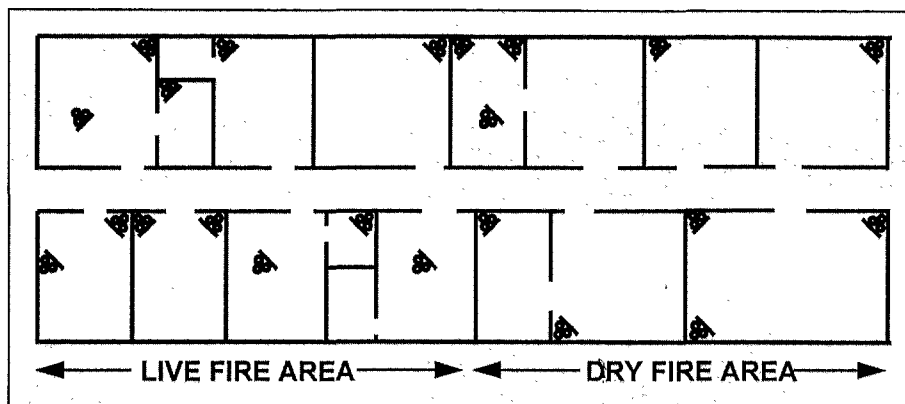


Figure 6. Building Layout

no training accidents occurred. Each room contained either two or three targets. To maintain the element of surprise, the targets were moved frequently. When time permits, furniture and different rules of engagement can be added to increase the difficulty.

Phase III training is conducted as an individual drill. Each soldier performs the duties of the 1-Man for every room of the dry-fire area and then the live-fire area. The leader evaluates the soldier by following him into the room, staying behind him to ensure that he performs the same drill he used on the quick-fire range. (In our training, all leaders conducted the drill before any soldiers, maintaining unit integrity and understanding of the standards.) Soldiers engaged each target with two rounds to ensure that it was disabled. Any stray bullets that missed the target area (sand bags) resulted in retraining on the quick-fire range. Leaders also assessed the confidence of each soldier on this drill before allowing him to move to Phase IV of training.

The standards for Phase IV, the 2-Man quick fire-drill, were the same as for Phase III except that Phase IV also included a night fire. Each two-man team had to complete the dry-fire rooms event before executing the live-fire rooms sequence. Leaders ensured that each man was proficient at both the 1-Man and 2-Man duties. Only after successfully completing the day fire were soldiers allowed to conduct the night fire.

The night fire was conducted with flashlights taped to the M16s and turned on as the team entered the room. On successful completion of Phase IV, *Night Fire*, the company was ready to conduct the battle drill *Clear a Room*.

The training events for the final phase of training were identical to those for Phase IV. Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants evaluated their own platoons. Fire-team integrity was maintained throughout both the day and night fires. The battle drill was validated at the platoon level by having soldiers from

different squads execute the drill as a team. Company validation was done in the same manner, using soldiers from each platoon to execute the drill.

The results of this training were significant. The soldiers' accuracy in hitting each target was well over 90 percent with the first round and close to 100 percent with the second round. Inspection of the targets following the three days of training showed that well over 95 percent of the hits were at center of mass on the silhouette. The lethality and precision that every clearing team developed left no doubt that they could effectively clear a room.

The company conducted this training in Somalia from 30 September 1993 through 2 October 1993 and returned to the battalion area the next morning, unaware of just how important this training would be to us that evening.

In late afternoon on 3 October, my company became the lead element from 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, to break through and rescue Task Force Ranger from deep behind enemy lines. For more than eight hours, we fought our way through intense enemy fire down the streets of Mogadishu, secured a shot-down UH-60 helicopter, and rescued more than 90 members of Task Force Ranger. When we reached the Ranger perimeter, we had to increase its size to accommodate an additional company. The downed UH-60 was currently outside the perimeter with U.S. soldiers still trapped in it. It was my plan to expand the perimeter around the aircraft and assist in cutting free our trapped soldiers. My men quickly secured the necessary buildings and kept the area secured while all the wounded and dead were evacuated.

The confidence and proficiency the company's soldiers demonstrated were even greater than my First Sergeant and I had hoped for. All issues were quickly resolved by conducting box training before going to the range. Every soldier, regardless of his position or weapon system, was required to pick up an M16 and execute the drill to stan-

dard. Soldiers received effective training that was both realistic and challenging. Following the events of 3-4 October, the company after-action review discussed the new drill at length and compared it to the old one. Without exception, the leaders felt more confident in this drill. The building clearance necessary to secure the area around the downed aircraft had gone quickly and efficiently, despite the confusion and the hostile presence. The new drill was proved in combat, and the end result was a company completely confident in its ability to clear a room in any situation.

Although the stack task is a difficult one on which to train and maintain proficiency, it is still a useful drill. With today's operational tempo, maintaining proficiency on even Battle Drills 1 and 2 is a challenge. Troopleading procedures take all this into account by ensuring that the unit conducts rehearsals before any mission, and units must effectively train on mission essential battle drills before deploying to a theater of operation. Urban operations are vastly different from the normal light infantry operational environment. The Rangers, who must be prepared to conduct urban operations, train on this regularly and are unquestionably the light infantry experts on it. But regular units must also be familiar with urban operations and be prepared to conduct them.

I believe that this combat proven technique should replace the current Battle Drill 6, but other infantrymen may have versions that are equally effective. The point is that Battle Drill 6 needs to be replaced with a drill that is simpler and more effective.

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